U.S. Representative
John Spratt South Carolina # 5th District
News Release

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$7 Million Authorized for Blood Research by Military

Spratt says Biopure could demonstrate value of Hemopure to Armed Forces

WASHINGTON – U.S. Rep. John Spratt (D-SC) announced today that the House Armed Services Committee has authorized $7 million for military research on Hemopure, the blood substitute made by Biopure Corporation. The Cambridge, Massachusetts company is scheduled to break ground this fall on an $85 million Hemopure production facility in Sumter, creating 185 new jobs.

Spratt, who is a senior member of the research and development subcommittee, requested the $7 million in the defense authorization bill reported by the full committee last week. The money, for the Army Medical Research and Material Command's Combat Casualty Care program, is earmarked specifically for further work on Hemopure.

"If this funding is appropriated," said Spratt, "Biopure will be able to demonstrate the viability of Hemopure for military medicine."

Spratt cautioned that the committee authorization was "just the first step" in the process of gaining final approval by Congress. "But," he said, "it's a good sign, and I have met already with members of the defense appropriations subcommittee and won support for the research."

Hemopure is a room-temperature stable formation of hemoglobin polymers that functions like human blood. It delivers oxygen to the body's tissues, reducing morbidity and mortality for injured military personnel. Unlike human blood, Hemopure has an extended shelf life, making it available for a range of military deployments. The blood that the Navy uses for ship and submarine deployments, for example, is good for only 43 days. Hemopure lasts up to three years, and can be stored at room temperature. The "blood" the Army uses for transfusion on the battlefield is actually plasma, and does not deliver oxygen as Hemopure does.

"There is a clear need for a stable, oxygen-carrying solution that can be readily employed in the treatment of combat casualties, both on the battlefield and in subsequent phases of treatment," Spratt said.

Hemopure has been approved for use in South Africa and has an application pending for

approval with the Food and Drug Administration. The safety and efficacy of Hemopure has been evaluated in 22 completed or ongoing clinical studies, primarily involving surgical patients. To date, more than 750 patients have been treated with Hemopure as an alternative to traditional transfusions.

"There is strong support in military medical circles for this research," said Spratt, "and there are numerous military advantages to Hemopure. Blood is cited in almost all readiness studies as an article in short supply. But before this blood substitute can be used, it has to be proven safe and effective, and that's the purpose of this funding."

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